

**TESTIMONY BY BILL LAMBERT
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Your summary says that high schools should prepare students for higher education as well as the workforce. I agree. Every student in America is important and deserves to have a successful life. To achieve this goal high schools must address the needs of all students, those that are college bound and those that will enter the workforce upon graduation.

We know that 70-75% of all graduating high school students will go to work upon graduation – this is proven every year. Only 25% go to a 4 year college or university.

Yet, in California our high school curriculum is 100% geared to college admission. Very few high schools have any type of career programs, even though we supposedly have mandated a career to work component throughout our curriculum. By career we are not talking about the old tracking method of college bound vs. vocational. We are talking about skill labored, management skills and entrepreneurial know-how. We are talking about mid-level entry jobs that still require a solid academic background peppered with other skills.

I believe that paying attention to every students need and creating a high sense of self esteem in every student is an absolute necessity. But the number 1 way to increase self-esteem is to give a person a sense of purpose and worth – and there are many avenues to that destination. This is a sharp contrast to the message I believe that we send to our students that the only way to be a success in life is to go to college.

Congress has passed a new law “NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND”. I would like to add a phrase to that – “NO CHILD SHOULD BE DISCOUNTED!” because they don’t have the desire, the finance or the aptitude to go to college.

About 6 months ago I heard and saw Police Chief Bratton and Minister Cecil Murray on cable T.V. with two gang kids from East Los Angeles. The two teenagers were asked what would it take to get them to leave the gang. The answer was to teach me a good paying decent career.

Their answer was simple. They both said – “Teach me, so I can get me a good paying job.” We should listen to them.

USA TODAY has a story entitled “**Major cause of joblessness lies with U.S. schools**”, dated March 30, 2004. According to the article...

“While job outsourcing fires up all-American outrage, it masks a more prevalent problem:

joblessness among young people that’s caused by high dropout rates. Each year, about 4 million

18-year-olds should graduate from high school. Of those, 1.2 million drop out without a degree.

Estimates of the jobs lost each year to outsourcing vary, with many economists putting the figure in the hundreds of thousands. That’s far less than the millions of young who are unemployed because they didn’t finish high school.

And unemployment among dropouts is growing. During 2003, there were 2.4 million young people ages 16-24 that didn’t finish high school at the time the jobless rate rose to 9%.

Yet dropout-driven unemployment doesn’t get the high level attention of outsourcing because states hide the problem behind exaggerated graduation rates. North Carolina reports 92% of its high school students graduate. Independent studies estimate the actual rate about 63%, according to a recent report by the Education Trust, a non-profit group. California says 87% graduate, when a more accurate estimate is 67%.”

With a good career program, we could save these kids.

In the Sacramento Bee dated May 10, 2004 there is a story by Dan Walters (see attached 1).

We must begin a discussion of one of the greatest void in our high schools – an emphasis on career education. I say high school because I want 14 year old students to begin to have life chances. I want them to go to school everyday looking forward to learning, and to know that this learning is headed somewhere – and that somewhere is the American Dream.

I want every student to feel a sense of accomplishment and this accomplishment can only be realized through sincere effort and increased motivation on the part of the student - and how do we get kids motivated? By giving every student the vision that they are someone who is going to make it.

Should all students be proficient in English? Absolutely. Mathematics? Absolutely. Should they have a well rounded education? Of Course. But they cannot accomplish the above if they are not motivated and they can't succeed if they are not in school.

Attached is a story from the San Francisco Chronicle dated March 2, 2004. It talks about unexcused absences, truancy and the answer seems to be more truancy officers.

"African American and Latino students make up 36 percent of the district's population. They accounted, however, for 66 percent of the K-12 students who has 12 or more unexcused absences during the 2002-2003 school year, according to numbers from a leaked report prepared by the district's research, planning and accountability department.

The raw date is eye-opening. Of the 8,258 African American students in San Francisco's public schools, 1,934 missed 12 or more days for no acceptable reason. Of the 11,986 Latino students, 1,651 missed 12 or more days. Compare these numbers to the 17,974 Chinese students who attend the city's public schools: Only 344 had 12 or more unexcused absences. Among the 5,427 white students, 327 missed 12 or more days.

The breakdown by ethnicity is crucial, because we can't target a solution if we don't know who's having the problem. It's important, too, because African Americans and Latinos are over represented in San Francisco's juvenile hall, reinforcing studies that show a direct correlation between truancy and juvenile delinquency. Predictably, there's also a strong correlation between childhood truancy and adult incarceration.

Superintendent Arlene Ackerman, who inherited the mess, pledged this year to end the rampant truancy. She hired seven truancy officers, implemented a uniform reporting system at each school and announced plans to open smaller, more inviting schools, among other efforts to attach the problem.

Ackerman acknowledged in a phone interview Monday that she was “devastated” to see the truancy numbers among African American and Latino students, though she suspected the problem when she saw such enormous achievement gaps between certain ethnic groups and the general student population. “I had heard (early on) that only 16 percent of African American students attended 90 or 95 percent of their classes,” she said. “That was the first number that just blew me away.”

In other words, 84 percent of African American students skipped school at least once every two weeks or so.”

I visited a school in the Bronx, NY a number of years ago with a similar ethnic population. As I toured with the principal and union representative I asked if they taught woodshop. The answer was we teach the building trades, which includes carpentry, plumbing, masonry, electric, etc. What about a foods class I asked. We teach the culinary arts. How to manage a restaurant, cook, buy the food and pay the bills. I asked about the drop out rates there. The answer was 0. What about absences? Answer was that going to school everyday was a priority of these students, many of whom were foster students and for the past 10 years I have been trying to set up a pilot career program in Los Angeles.

I would like to solicit the assistance of the business community to indicate where in LA County there will be good paying jobs over the next 10 to 15 years. There is no point in just having a print shop if there is no market for printers.

I have been working on a **School To Career Proposal** for Jordan High School in Los Angeles for the last 6 or 7 years. This is a model that I believe have great merit and all of us need to make happen (attachment 2).

And finally, to even make a small beginning will take dollars. Where will they come from? How much is the State willing to budget? How much is the business community willing to fund?

I have an idea -- a year ago the Los Angeles Times ran a story about Welfare to Work money in Los Angeles County currently not being totally used because of a lack of students.

Here's my suggestion: The Federal Government sends to counties and cities dollars earmarked "Welfare to Work": These funds are important to those unemployed who are out of work and have to be trained or retrained to obtain skills needed for employment in today's market place.

Currently our secondary schools are not part of the welfare formula. Our proposal is to allow our high schools to obtain: "Welfare to Work" dollars in order to implement career programs. If we could use these funds we can offer all students a reason to stay in school and improve their daily attendance. The government could get twice as much for the same amount of federal dollars.

Here's how:

We modernize and/or establish career programs in high schools. High school students can take advantage of up to date modern career opportunities from 8am-3pm, from 3-10pm "Welfare to Work" and adult education can utilize the same training facilities and modern equipment and have the best trained teachers.

As a part of this proposal we should consult the business community, the chambers of commerce to determine what the needs of business will be in the next 10-15 years so that these programs can have meaning for every one.

All of us are concerned with dropouts, poor attendance, gangs, and safety, etc. Making our students successful gives them a new reason to stay in school and enjoy a quality life!

"NO CHILD SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND and NO CHILD SHOULD BE LEFT OUT.

I want to thank the California Performance Review Commission for making School to Career a high priority. The time has come and it's now time to do more than talk. I hope that by this time next year or sooner we are opening at last a number of pilot projects in Los Angeles.

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Attachment 1
Attachment 2

(Attachment 1)

DAN WALTERS: Kids with tool belts also deserve educators' respect

By Dan Walters – Bee Columnist- (Published May 10, 2004)

When Andrew deBrito went to school Thursday, he strapped on a tool belt rather than a book bag.

The 17-year-old Wheatland High School junior was one of about 200 Sacramento-area builders-in-training - 13 teams from 12 high schools - who took part in a two-day design-build competition at Cal Expo, sponsored by the Sacramento Builders' Exchange to boost vocational education.

Voc-ed, as it's called, needs all the help it can get. The state's educational and political overseers have a very evident disdain for the notion of training high school students for jobs and have reworked state policy to reflect a wholly fallacious, if popular, assumption that every high schooler is headed to college.

Indeed, just a day before the saws began whirring and the hammers began pounding at Cal Expo, state schools chief Jack O'Connell issued a press release crowing about initial legislative approval of his high school "reform" program whose centerpiece measure would put every student on a college prep track. A Senate committee analysis suggests that its provisions would undermine voc-ed classes because they would not meet specified college-track standards.

Already, countless carpentry, mechanics and other voc-ed programs have been abolished or severely reduced by administrators who are under heavy political pressure to raise academic test scores. With about a third of high school freshmen dropping out of school already, this inane obsession with college prep classes and academic tests, when coupled with the wholesale destruction of voc-ed, can only worsen that problem.

Meanwhile, however, auto repair shops, building contractors and other employers have thousands of jobs - high-paying jobs that cannot be outsourced to India - going begging. One auto dealer has been renting very expensive billboard space along Interstate 405 near Los Angeles International Airport to advertise for auto mechanics. California, meanwhile, creates 16,000 new construction jobs a year, many of which go unfilled.

DeBrito is planning to fill one of those jobs, and perhaps become a licensed contractor himself, after finishing high school.

"My whole family is in the trades," he says. "It's like sports."

His team, and the others in the competition, were given identical sets of construction materials, but each had to design and build its own structure, a small outbuilding that might be used as a storage shed or workshop. After grading, the structures were to be displayed at the Sacramento County Fair and then sold, with the proceeds going back into the high schools' voc-ed programs.

Dan Walters

The politics of the one-size-fits-all approach to high school are evident. Parents - particularly middle- and upper-middle-class parents who are politically active - universally want to believe that their children are destined for college and professional careers. Indeed, we've almost been brainwashed to believe that anyone who doesn't pursue that path is somehow a lesser being - even though common sense tells us that not every kid is suited for academe, and even though society is absolutely dependent on the skills and energies of people like Andrew deBrito to build its houses and offices, fabricate and maintain its machinery and otherwise do its real work.

Politicians and educational administrators pander to the myth because it's the safest attitude to take. To suggest that some kids might, in fact, be better off as mechanics, carpenters, electricians or plumbers is to risk the wrath of parents, or even allegations of racist "tracking." And the state's colleges exacerbate the trend by making it very difficult for would-be voc-ed teachers to gain credential-worthy training.

Privately, many superintendents, principals and teachers decry the college-or-nothing assumption, and the destruction of voc-ed that it generates, but feel helpless in the face of pressure from above.

(Attachment 2)

School To Career Proposal Los Angeles Unified School District

Target School: **Jordan High School, Los Angeles
Unified School District**

Target Population: **Grades 9-Adult**

Proposal: Construction of a “Career Development Center” on the campus of Jordan Senior High School to provide educational services of the community and enhance the employability of the youths that attend Jordan and surrounding high schools. The envisioned Center will serve a population of up to nine hundred full time students attending Jordan with up to an additional three hundred students that wish to attend the Center who currently attend other surrounding high schools. The Center will provide a balanced curriculum that will include academic preparation and specific career/technical training. The focus of the career areas of instruction will be determined by labor market information made available by the California Job Service. Each student will choose a “career cluster” of interest and follow a preparation program that will lead them to post high school employment, further training at the community college level, apprenticeship training, or direct matriculation to a four year university program.

The Center will also serve the low income “Welfare to Work” adult population after regular school hours. The curriculum will be modified for adult learners and will be designed to assure that they have the required academic and career/technical skills in order to obtain high paying jobs in Los Angeles area.

Need: Jordan High School is located in one of the most impoverished sections of Los Angeles. The community around Jordan High School is a designated federal “Empowerment Zone”, one of only two in the Los Angeles area, which qualifies the area for special funding consideration from the federal government for economic development. The economic development incentives associated with this designation provide employers and businesses extra financial opportunities for locating their operations in the area in addition to hiring local residents. Additionally, adjacent to “Jordan High School is “Jordan Downs”, a subsidized housing project. Low income residents of this project are in need of education and career training in order to break the welfare cycle that has limited their prosperity in the past. Overall, the Jordan High School community exhibits high unemployment and dropout rates for youth and adults alike.

Program Activities: The envisioned Center will provide but not be limited to the following specialized educational programs for students:

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| Grade 9 | Students will choose a career cluster of interest with the associated course of study. Students will receive career counseling to assist in the selection of a career cluster. |
| Grade 10 | Students will participate in academic and career/technical training meeting all State of California educational standards. |
| Grade 11 | Students will participate in industry sponsored internships for a minimum of one semester. |
| Grade 12 | All students will prepare applications for employment, post high school training, or four-year college admittance. |

Post Graduation: 85% of all graduation students will be employed and/or enrolled in further education and training.